



PP05 Certification process

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Elaborated by: Dr. Mark Tomin	Reviewed by: Dipl. Ing. Dagmar Snohová	Approved by: Dr. Katarína Srdošová
Date/ Signature: 28.10.2016	Date/ Signature: 28.10.2016	Date/ Signature: 28.10.2016
In force from: 01.11.2016	Distribution list: <i>Copy No.1 – web portal</i>	
ORIGINAL	Electronic form of control	Revision No.: 0
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CONTENT

Article	Name of the article
1	Purpose
2	Terms, definitions and abbreviations
3	Certification process



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1 PURPOSE OF THE DIRECTIVE

This procedure defines the certification process of 3EC International a.s. (3EC, COMS) covering the fulfilment of the EN ISO / IEC 17021-1: 2015 standard requirements. (Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems).

2 VALIDITY RANGE

All personnel of COMS (internal and external) follow this procedure.

3 TERMS, DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

- **COMS** – Certification organization for management systems
- **3EC** – independent certification organization, accredited for the performance of management systems certification
- **Client** – any organization whose management system is being audit for certification purposes
- **certified Client** – organization of whose management system has been certified
- **audit** – is systematic, independent and documented process of audit evidence gaining and their objective evaluation with the purpose of determining the scope in which audit criteria are fulfilled
- **certification audit of management system** – first verification of the Client's management system
- **surveillance audit of management system** – surveillance over the management system, performed by the form of regular annual audits of management system
- **following audit of management system** – physical verification of the implementation of proposed corrective actions by the Client in response to a nonconformity and/or nonconformities found during certification, surveillance or short-notice audit
- **special audit of management system** – verification of the system out of the program defined by 3EC scheme over management system, which is performed on the Client's request for the certification scope extension
- **short-notice audit of management system** – verification of management system out of the program defined by 3EC scheme over management system, which is performed on the basis of third party complaint, or in case of significant changes in the management system of the Client or as follow up on suspended Clients, in such cases can 3EC perform also verification by the form of unannounced audit
- **recertification audit of management system** – verification of management system after 3-year certification cycle expiration
- **transfer audit of management system** - verification of management system during transfer of the certification already granted to the Client from another accredited certification organization during the validity of certification cycle
- **3EC documents** – *POL08 Policy of management system certification mark use* and other documents in applicable versions, with which the Client was acknowledged, resp. are available on 3EC website

4 CERTIFICATION PROCESS

4.1 APPLICATION

First step of certification process is filling in the application on form [F01](#), which is publicly available on web site www.3ec.sk. Through this application, the applicant sends specific required information and specific data about each site which is object of the certification. Based on the completed application, COMS reviews the application, If needed, asks for the

additional information and informs the applicant whether COMS is able to perform the certification process within the scope of its accreditation. If yes, the price offer for the Client is elaborated and after its approval, also the contract is elaborated. After the signing of the contract COMS continues with the certification process.

4.2 INITIAL CERTIFICATION – Stage 1 of the certification audit

In accordance with the requirements of standard EN ISO / IEC 17021-1: 2015, Stage 1 is realized at the client's premises and it is mandatory step of the certification process. With very small organizations, or organizations with simple activities, it is possible to decide within the application review that the Stage 1 will be performed in administrative form in the COMS Office by reviewing of documentation after the requesting of needed information. During the administrative review of information, the lead auditor is in contact with the Client via phone or internet and discusses with the Client possible uncertainties. During the Stage 1, the lead auditor assesses the state of readiness of the Client for the certification, for the performance of Stage 2. Lead auditor verifies the existence of prescribed documented information of the management system, internal audits, documentation review, risk analysis, performance indicators, organization processes and can highlight the strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities for improvement of the Client's management system. The required scope of certification, non-applicable requirements and boundaries are discussed and specified. It serves for the preparation for the Stage 2 of the certification. The result of Stage 1 of the certification audit is a report about the state of readiness of the organization for the certification audit. (for the Stage 2 of certification audit). After the review the report is sent to the Client by lead auditor electronically.

4.3 INITIAL CERTIFICATION – Stage 2 of the certification audit

The course of this audit must be initiated within 90 days since the completion of the Stage 1. During Stage 2 are audited all identified process of the organization, all applicable standard requirements and related requirements of interested parties within the scope and context of the organization, reviewed and approved scope of certification which was approved in the application for the certification.

The audit identifies the strengths and weaknesses or nonconformities in case of failure to comply the requirements of reference standard/s, audit criteria, as well as opportunities to improve the efficiency of the management system. Identified nonconformities can be small (non-systemic nonconformities) or large (systemic nonconformities). Lead auditor informs about their solution during the opening and closing meeting. The Client organization must make and send corrective action to the lead auditor within 30 days and found nonconformities must be effectively implemented and removed within 90 days from the last day of the audit. Nonconformities must be resolved before a final decision on the certification. There must exist an objective evidence and lead auditor closes them in the audit report. The result of the Stage 2 is therefore a report that is sent electronically after the review to the Client.

4.4 CERTIFICATION DECISION

On the closing meeting of Stage 2 of certification audit the lead auditor informs members of the Client what result will be provided to 3EC International a.s. Certification board, COMS. Following recommendations are included:

- Recommendation for certification with chosen accreditation of COMS,
- Recommendation for certification after the verification of efficiency of corrective actions,
- Lead auditor does not recommend certification, lead auditor recommends repeated audit at the Client (on-site audit) for the verification of the efficiency of the correction,

corrective actions (with large number of large (systemic) nonconformities, i.e. for example with total absence of standard/s requirements or Client's own documentation, etc.)

Confirmation of the certification decision is performed after the review of all available outputs from Stage 1 and 2 of the certification audit. Record about the final result from the review is completed on the form [F13 Certification decision/ Certification Board Review \(CBR\)](#).

4.5 SURVEILLANCE AUDIT

3EC verifies the functionality and degree of the implementation of the management system through surveillance audits at the Client, which the contractual parties agreed to and planned for the entire contractual period. The purpose of surveillance audits is to confirm the eligibility of previous successful certification process.

Term surveillance audit will be set so that the audit took place in accordance with the requirements of the international standard ISO / IEC 17021-1: 2015, i.e. in the case of the first surveillance audit carried out later than 12 months from the date of the initial certification decision. 3EC conduct surveillance audits at least once in a calendar year. Preliminary date will be agreed on a specific audit prior to an accuracy of calendar days, which the auditor shall record in the audit report.

4.6 RECERTIFICATION AUDIT

In case that at the end of the first contractual period, the results of surveillance audits are conforming and satisfying, the recertification of Client's management system can follow. If the client expresses an intention to continue with the certification process, the contract is automatically extended for the same length contract period (unless the parties agree otherwise). In case the Client does not want to continue with the cooperation, the Client must give a written notice to 3EC later than three months before the end of the first and the following contractual period. This rule of prolongation of the contractual period is applied accordingly for the following contractual period.

If there are during the audit identified strong and weak sides or nonconformities, if there comes to failure to comply with reference standard/s, audit criteria, as well as opportunities for improvement, identified nonconformities may be small (non-systemic nonconformities) or large (systemic nonconformities) of their solution informs during the opening and closing meeting the lead auditor. The Client must make and send corrective action to lead auditor within 30 days and found nonconformity must be effectively implemented and removed within 90 days from the last day of the audit. Nonconformities must be resolved before a final decision on the certification. There must exist objective evidence and lead auditor will conclude them in the report. The result of the Stage 2 is therefore a report that is sent electronically after the review to the Client.

If the recertification activities are successfully completed before the expiry date of the existing certification, the new expiry date of the certification may be based on the termination date of the existing certification. Release date of the new certificate is at the earliest the day of the recertification decision.

If COMS has not completed the re-certification audit or is unable to verify the implementation of correction and corrective actions for any systemic nonconformity before the certification, recertification is not recommended and the validity of the certification would not be extended. The Client is informed accordingly by writing and the consequences are explained to the Client.

After the end of certification, COMS renews certification during the six months provided that the emergency recertification activities are completed, or at least carry out the Stage 2 of

the certification audit. Effective date of the certificate will be the earliest the date of recertification decision and the expiry date of the certificate is based on the previous certification cycle.

4.7 TRANSFER OF THE CERTIFICATE

Before the performance of transfer audit of management system is the Client obliged to submit to COMS valid certificate of management system, the last audit management system report, documentation of corrective actions to all nonconformities or other relevant documents based on the mutual agreement between contractual parties. The validity of the certificate in case of successful completion of the transfer of management system certification is the same as the validity of the original certificate issued which is transferred from another certification organization.

4.8 SUSPENDING, WITHDRAWING OR REDUCING THE SCOPE OF CERTIFICATION

If during the audit occur facts that indicate that the certified management system does not fulfil requirements of the standard/s, COMS can suspend, withdraw or reduce the scope of certification.

COMS shall suspend the certification in case:

- the Client's certified management system has persistently or seriously failed to meet certification requirements, including requirements for the effectiveness of the management system, or
- The certified Client does not allow surveillance, special or short-notice audit, or audit of repeated certification (recertification), or
- The certified Client does not fulfil the obligations regarding the billing for the performed audit.

The suspension of certification may also be requested by the Client. Suspension of the certification is the start the process of "de-certification". Suspension of the certification does not have suspensive effect unless it is possible to agree with the Client on further procedure that complies with the requirements for the accredited certification in accordance with the signed certification contract, then the suspension of certification or "de-certification" process must lead to the withdrawal of the granted certification.

COMS restores the suspended certification If the issue that has resulted in the suspension has been resolved. Failure to resolve the issues that have resulted in the suspension in a time established by the certification organization results in withdrawal or reduction of the scope of certification. Period of suspension is not longer than 6 months.

4.9 SPECIAL AUDITS, EXPANDING SCOPE OF CERTIFICATION

Client who is granted a certification can apply for the expanding of the scope of granted certification. COMS decides on the method of the certification scope expansion, what is documented in the application review and informs the Client. Usually the certification contract is updated.

The Client may also apply for the certification expansion for its other sites. COMS decides on the method of the certification scope expansion for the other sites, what is documented in the application review and informs the Client. Usually the certification contract is updated. 3EC conducts special audit of management system for the Client's request on the granted certification scope extension, if the scope extension of granted certification is not performed during the surveillance audit.

The procedure follows according to part 4.4., i.e. confirmation of the certification decision is performed based on the review of all available outputs from the audit. Record on review result is the form [F13 Decision on certification/ Certification Board Review \(CBR\)](#).

4.10 SHORT-NOTICE AUDIT OF MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

3EC must conduct a short-notice audit of certified Client with the aim to investigate complaint or in response to changes at the Client mentioned in part 4.11 or as follow up on suspended Clients. In such cases, 3EC describes to Client the conditions under which the audit is conducted and in advance informs the Client with them. 3EC also pays attention to audit team compilation to prevent any objections.

COMS is in these cases, behaves particularly sensitively and considerately and in full association with the certified Client, in order such audit disrupts the organization's operation minimally to prevent any objections.

The certification decision is performed based on the review of all available outputs from the audit. Record on review result is the form [F13 Decision on certification/ Certification Board Review \(CBR\)](#).

4.11 CLIENT'S CHANGES

The Client is obliged to immediately inform 3EC of any significant changes to its operations and/or products (goods and/or services, number of employees, etc.) within the management system, or change in any other circumstances that may affect the further competence of its management system to meet the requirements of the relevant standard (standards) used for the certification or the validity of the certificate. Such changes are understood as:

- changes in legal, commercial, organizational or ownership statute,
- changes in organization and management (e.g. key management personnel, decision-makers, professionals),
- contact addresses and workplaces,
- operation scope of activities covered in the certified management system,
- major changes in the management system and procedures

Any significant change may be the reason for the performance of special or follow-up audit, or change of the issued certificate. 3EC assess the significance of the changes and take adequate measures of which shall promptly inform the Client.

4.12 APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS

If the client does not agree with the final decision of 3EC to refuse, suspend or withdraw the certification or reduce the scope of certification, the Client can file an appeal which must be received by 3EC in written form by registered mail or courier service within 15 calendar days of the receipt of the document which object to an appeal. Anyone can oppose practices or activities of 3EC or file a complaint on the Client's certified management system. The complaint must be submitted in writing via registered mail or courier.

In general, the appeal or complaint must be lodged in the first instance to 3EC. If the appeal or complaint is not accepted in the first instance by 3EC, the Client or a third party has the right to contact to the relevant accreditation body. 3EC informs the Client or a third party about the result of the appeal proceedings or the outcome of a complaint in writing via registered mail or courier within 30 days (in case of complaint can 3EC, in justified cases, extend the deadline to 60 days) after their receipt.

In the case of complaints against COMS, COMS in the review and decision on the complaint does not act in a discriminatory manner towards the complainant.

Policy of appeals and Policy of complaints is listed on the web site www.3ec.sk.